

State Senator · Irma Clark-Coleman

Serving the 3rd District Constituents in Detroit, Dearborn & River Rouge

Clark-Coleman fights for Veterans

In a move that honors the sacrifice and bravery of our veterans and service people, Senator Irma Clark-Coleman introduced Senate Bill 1020 to increase veterans' access to the homestead tax break. The bill is stalled in committee and is awaiting action.

Under the proposal, veterans and servicepersons can earn up to \$15,000 a year and still qualify for a tax break. Current law limits income to \$7,500 per year.

"Our veterans have fought hard and have sacrificed much for us to maintain our democracy," Senator Clark-Coleman said. "We must not limit their access to the American dream of owning and maintaining a home."

Both Democrats and Republicans initially supported the



measure that has been referred to the Senate Finance committee. A hearing on the bill has not yet been scheduled.

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Dearborn to Detroit Connection Underway

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) recently awarded the Southwest Detroit and Dearborn Greenway project \$467,280 to build a 1.4-mile trail that will connect Patton Park in Detroit to Lapeer Park in Dearborn.

The MDOT grant is part of nearly \$20.5 million in Transportation Enhancement funding for 37 projects that will make downtown and business districts more appealing, create new foot and bike paths, and improve roadside parks for the benefit of motorists and tourists.

"It is wonderful that two of southeastern Michigan's greatest communities will be linked together by a greenway that will attract

families and outdoor enthusiasts alike," Senator Clark-Coleman said. "I am encouraged by the state's efforts to create jobs, enhance communities, and improve the quality of life in Michigan."

Under federal law, 10 percent of federal surface transportation funds are earmarked for Transportation Enhancement projects. Administered by MDOT, the grants enable communities to invest in landscapes, streetscapes, and bike path development.

Transportation Enhancement funds provide a maximum of up to 80 percent of the money required for each project, with the remainder coming from state and local governments and the private sector.



Dear Constituents,

As the spring season approaches its mid-point, we Michigan residents find ourselves enjoying the promise of better-equipped high school graduates, higher minimum wages, and greener neighborhoods. These quality-of-life issues give us hope that we can improve our lives in the midst of international and local challenges.

The State Legislature is working hard to meet the needs of the public. Although the process is packed with differences of opinions, the greater good manages to be served.

At this writing, the budget process is underway. Governor Granholm has proposed a budget for the 2007 Fiscal Year that lays out a solid plan to distribute the state's resources in a fair and fiscally responsible manner.

Funding for schools and programs for school-age children will receive the biggest increases. K-12 public schools will see a jump of \$225 in the per-pupil grant. Governor Granholm has also proposed additional funding for after-school tutoring programs and early education ventures.

I pledge to continue to address those issues that are critical to the deserving residents of the 3rd District.

Sincerely,

Irma Clark-Coleman
State Senator • 3rd District

State Tackles E. Coli in Rouge River

Michigan's Department of Environmental Quality has received a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency to develop a plan to address E. coli in the Rouge River. The plan, known as a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), will analyze water samples and target areas that can be improved to meet state water quality standards.

The Rouge River has historically had high levels of E. coli resulting from combined sewer overflows and other pollution that make the water unsafe for body contact. The plan will focus on E. coli sources from the Rouge River Main, Upper, Middle, Lower, Bell, and Franklin Branches, and Evans Ditch.

The DEQ has partnered with local organizations to determine E. coli sample locations and share data that will help identify the sources of contamination. Once the sources have been identified, efforts will be focused on eliminating or reducing them.

Insurer Admits Race-Based Pricing, Makes Amends

Insurance Commissioner Linda A. Watters recently signed a consent order requiring the Western and Southern Life Insurance Company to make amends for using race-based underwriting and rating practices.

The race-based policies were issued between 1957 and 1970. Investigators found that Western and Southern Life unknowingly acquired several companies that had engaged in this practice. As such, these practices were neither willful nor intentional violations.

“Charging consumers higher rates because of their race is just

plain wrong,” Commissioner Watters said. “I’m pleased that Western and Southern Life has agreed to make amends for this unfortunate chapter in their history.”

Seventy-six Michigan policies are affected by the consent order and payment has already been granted to some policyholders. Payment amounts vary.

As an example, if the policy would have paid \$1,000 at death it now will pay approximately \$1,200 at death. Those with proof of terminated policies have one year to present proof of past policies that were priced higher because of race.

Western and Southern Life is also required to make an administrative payment to each state participating in the settlement based upon the number of policies affected in each state. Michigan will receive the minimum administrative payment of \$1,000 as a reimbursement of investigative-related costs.

This order is in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Insurance that was the lead agency in the multi-state case. Illinois, Indiana, and North Carolina were also involved in the examinations related to the sale of industrial life and certain other life insurance policies.

Child Advocacy Group Needs Help

The Michigan Children’s Trust Fund needs the community’s help to continue its mission of delivering support services and abuse prevention programs to the children and parents who have the greatest need. The group’s sole purpose is to prevent child abuse. Statewide it has 71 local councils.

Here are some sobering facts:

- Every five minutes a child in Michigan is reported a victim of abuse and neglect.

- More than 87 percent of children reported as abused were harmed by a parent.
- Parents who were abused as children are likely to inflict the same physical, emotional, and psychological damage on their own children.
- Abused and neglected children are far more likely to become involved in crime.

This past tax season, Michigan Children’s Trust Fund kicked off the “Put Your Money Where Your Heart

Is” campaign that solicited contributions through state income tax returns. Although the 2006 tax season has ended, you can still help the organization by mailing your tax deductible donation to:

Children’s Trust Fund
P.O. Box 30037
Lansing, MI 48909

Michigan Workers Win Wage Hike

Michigan Democrats were victorious in leading the Legislature to raise hourly wages to \$7.40 by July 2008. Governor Granholm signed the wage increase into law in March marking the first increase in the minimum wage since 1997.

The new law will increase the minimum wage in three steps: On October 1, 2006, it will increase to \$6.95; then to \$7.15 on July 1, 2007; and finally to \$7.40 on July 1, 2008. Michigan joins more than 15 other states that have increased their minimum wage over federal standards.

The campaign to bring parity to the non-salaried workforce grew in size as everyday citizens demanded that hard work be rewarded with fair pay. Public pressure caused the divided Legislature to approve the increase.

Governor Signs Education Bill

Governor Granholm recently made tougher high school graduation standards the law of the land when she signed Senate Bill 1124 during a formal ceremony. The new standards will take effect in the 2007-2008 academic school year. Michigan’s new curriculum standards include English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, World Language, Health & Physical Education and Fine Arts or Music. The state’s push for tougher graduation standards positions our students as players in the worldwide field of competitive education. While there are some areas of the measure with which Senator Clark-Coleman personally disagrees, she believes it’s the best that we can do, at this time, for our children. She hosted two forums in her district to inform the public of the upcoming curriculum changes. At this writing, the Detroit Police Department has announced its plans to enforce an existing city ordinance that holds parents

financially and legally responsible for the behavior of their minor children. The new education standards call for the same, if not greater, degree of parental involvement. Parents must work with their children, educators, and members of the community to ensure that our young scholars are equipped to be successful. Tougher academic standards mean tougher discipline and tighter controls at home. Just to our north, the Province of Ontario, Canada recently revamped its curriculum “to establish high, internationally competitive standards of education...and to ensure graduates are well prepared to compete successfully in a global economy and a rapidly changing world,” according to Ontario’s newest Education Ministry guide. Our Canadian neighbors require high school students to study various levels of the arts, business studies, Canadian World studies, classical and world languages, English, math, guidance & career education, health

& physical education, science, social studies, and technological education. The new requirements are not an indictment of our school districts. In fact, many school districts have individually set standards equivalent to those proposed by the State Board of Education. For instance, the Detroit Public School District is well on its way to meeting the proposed requirements. A few course additions would bring the state’s largest school district into complete compliance with the intended standards as they are today. Nationwide, more than 42 states are moving toward strengthening graduation requirements. According to the latest report by the Education Commission of the States, a national group, “requiring students to complete specific courses is a good first step toward preparing them for the world after high school.”

Proposed Michigan Merit Core Curriculum	
English Language Arts: 4 Credits	Credits to include: English 9, English 10, English 11, English 12 (or Humanities sequence or Career and Technical Education (CT) sequence). These credits will include writing, expository writing, creative writing, grammar, informational text, speaking, representing, reading, listening, viewing, literature, culture, and language.
Mathematics: 4 Credits	Credits to include: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, one additional Math or Math-related credit (for example: Calculus, Trigonometry, Electronics, Accounting, Probability and Statistics) (or Integrated Math sequence or CT sequence). Math must be taken in the senior year.
Science: 3 Credits	Credits to include: Biology, Physics or Chemistry, one additional Science credit (for example: Earth Science, Environmental Science, Forensic Science, Microbiology, Nanoscience, Oceanography, AP/IB/College for credit Sciences, Health Sciences, Agriscience, Chemistry, Physics) (or Integrated Science sequence or CT sequence).
Social Science: 3 Credits	Credits to include: Government/Civics .5 (semester), Economics .5 (semester), U.S. History (integrated with Geography), World History (integrated with Geography) (or Humanities sequence or CT sequence).
Health/Physical Education: 1 Credit	Examples: Health, Personal Fitness.
Visual And Performing Arts: 1 Credit	Examples: Vocal and Instrumental Music, Art, Music Appreciation, Art History, Multicultural Art, Readers’ Theater, Dance.
World Languages: 2 Credits	
SUBTOTAL	18 Credits



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E-News Report



The Clark-Coleman E-News Report is up and running and we would love for you to

be a part of it. To subscribe, please send your e-mail address to seniclark-coleman@senate.michigan.gov and write "e-news add" in the subject line. You can check out the Senator's latest activities in Lansing and in the District by visiting her Senate website at www.senate.mi.gov/clark-coleman.

Senator Clark-Coleman Welcomes New Staffer

Senator Clark-Coleman recently expanded her staff to include Tarek M. Baydoun as a Community Representative. He will serve the people of Dearborn.

Baydoun is a student at the University of Michigan at Dearborn where he has engaged in a dual major of Political Science and Communications, and was recently re-elected as Student Body President.

"Tarek is an excellent addition to our team," Senator Clark-Coleman said. "He is a community activist who is well respected by his contemporaries and his elders."

A contributing writer for the Arab American news publications, Baydoun has also worked for U.S. Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

(D-Detroit). He performed constituent case work on immigration and social security issues in addition to conducting a hugely successful "Get Out the Vote" campaign for the 2004 elections.

A passionate advocate for community interests, Baydoun has built strong coalitions among the University of Michigan at Dearborn's student population. He will be based in Senator Clark-Coleman's district office in Dearborn.

Tarek replaces Faye Beydoun who has joined the U.S.-Arab Economic Forum. "We congratulate Faye in her new position as Project Leader and are proud of her ascension to the international arena. We wish her well," Senator Clark-Coleman said.

Meet the Staff

Shirley Sims – Office Manager

Shirley is the "voice" that answers every phone call and makes sure constituent concerns are routed to the appropriate staff person. She manages Senator Clark-Coleman's schedule, which makes her a stickler for details. A past aide to former Governor Jim Blanchard, Shirley also serves as a trouble shooter who directs constituents to the proper state or federal department to address their issues.

Shirley sends birthday greetings to every senior citizen in the district. She also dispatches certificates to graduates of the District's elementary, middle, and high schools as well as colleges and universities.

Gary Pollard – Chief of Staff

Gary makes sure Senator Clark-Coleman's office runs efficiently and effectively. He represents the Senator at public events and ceremonies.

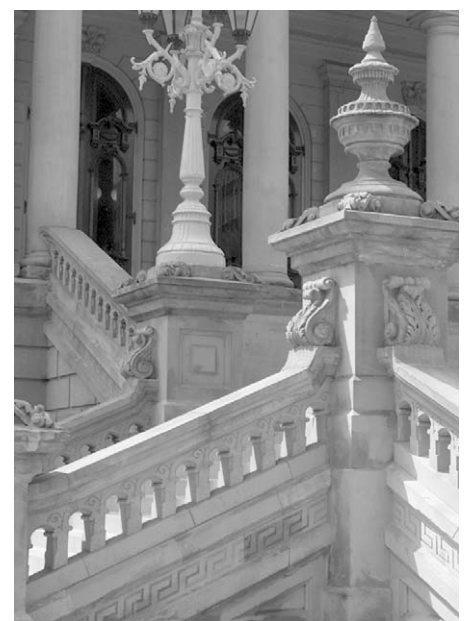
Known for his patience, Gary handles intricate constituent concerns and meets every issue with a calm firmness.

Gary also served in the Michigan House of Representatives as the chief of staff for former Representative Fred Durhal. His skills have translated well into the Senate where he attends Senate sessions along with Senator Clark-Coleman. Gary is a graduate of Ferris State University and a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

Brigitte Maxey – Legislative Liaison

Brigitte is the staff writer who is responsible for producing press releases, speeches, newsletters, media alerts, and all manner of the written word for Senator Clark-Coleman. She is a graduate of Howard University and holds a bachelor's degree in Journalism.

Brigitte writes Tributes and Resolutions as requested by



constituents and community groups. To date, she's written Resolutions declaring statewide observances of December 1, 2005, as Rosa Parks Day and February 1, 2006, as Jerome Bettis Day. She also penned an official Senate declaration honoring the life and legacy of former Wayne County Executive Edward H. McNamara.